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The President's Daily Brief

February 13, 1974

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

February 13, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The arrest of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is discussed on *Page 1*.

King Faysal is trying to postpone the conference of Arab oil ministers that had been scheduled tomorrow in Tripoli. (*Page 2*)

Israel may be planning to retaliate for Syria's shelling of Israeli civilian settlements on the Golan Heights. (*Page 3*)

Communist footdragging has considerably diminished chances for naming a new coalition government in Laos by February 21, the first anniversary of the peace accord. (*Page 4*)

Philippine troops are gradually reasserting control over Muslim rebels in the city of Jolo. (*Page 5*)

President Sadat appears to be offering good offices to bring together representatives from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh so that there can be a fully attended Islamic Summit on February 22. (*Page 6*)

Romania's President Ceausescu is touring Arab states to stave off an economic boycott of Romanian goods. (*Page 7*)

Prime Minister Whitlam, during a recent tour, was largely successful in convincing Southeast Asian leaders that Australia is sincere about desiring a constructive role in the region. (*Page 8*)

At Annex, [redacted]

[redacted] China [redacted]

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USSR

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is under arrest, according to his wife. Police took Solzhenitsyn from his wife's apartment late Tuesday, after he refused to comply with a summons to appear at the prosecutor's office that morning. Solzhenitsyn had appeared to abandon all caution recently and to seek confrontation with the regime. His defiance of the summons was a challenge to legal authority that could not be left unanswered.

Western newsmen who saw Solzhenitsyn on Monday told the US Embassy in Moscow that he was resolved not to make the authorities' task easier. He did not seem averse to provoking them into taking him forcibly. He gave the correspondents part of the unpublished last half of the Gulag Archipelago; the extract condemns current Soviet legal procedures.

Solzhenitsyn also issued this week a written statement that refers to the "complete and general illegality ruling in our country," and demands that a host of past and present wrongs be corrected. In essence, he is enunciating the principle of civil disobedience.

Implications of the arrest for Soviet foreign and domestic policy will depend on the nature of the charges and the handling of the case. The most satisfactory solution, from the Kremlin's point of view, would be expulsion--a theme that has been sounded repeatedly both privately by Soviet officials and publicly by the media. The leveling of formal charges yesterday, however, leaves open the possibility that he will be tried and convicted. A quick trial and light sentence on some minor charges, perhaps unrelated to publication of the Gulag Archipelago, might be the best way out for the Soviets. Such a solution would lessen the damage the affair will have on Moscow's detente policy and on relations with foreign communist parties. Considerable damage would be caused by a long detention, a trial focused on Solzhenitsyn's activities as a writer, and a heavy sentence.

The decision to arrest the author was made at the very top. Until now, the leadership has not been ready to prosecute, largely because of the effect abroad. Commentators had voiced the opinion that action should not be taken that would make a martyr of Solzhenitsyn. Letters in the press urged that he leave, or be made to leave, the country.

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ARAB STATES

The conference of Arab oil ministers, scheduled to begin tomorrow in Tripoli, was postponed early this morning, according to a spokesman of the Kuwait Embassy in Beirut. No reason was given for the postponement.

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King Faysal had been working to obtain a postponement until after the Islamic summit in Pakistan February 22 and 23. [redacted]

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Faysal reportedly has been motivated by a desire to allow more time for attempts to work out a Syrian-Israeli disengagement. He may believe that unless there is progress on this soon, there is little prospect for an easing of the Arab oil embargo. The Saudis may also hope that postponement of the meeting will prompt Washington to increase pressure on Israel for concessions.

Meanwhile, Faysal and presidents Boumediene, Sadat, and Asad are scheduled to meet today in Algiers--not in Aswan, as reported earlier. They are likely to focus on military disengagement on the Syrian front as well as on the oil embargo.

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SYRIA-ISRAEL

The Israeli press claims that the three-hour Syrian barrage along the entire front on February 11 was one of the heaviest since the October war and that for the first time Israeli settlements there were hit. Two Israelis were killed and five soldiers were wounded. One settlement was severely damaged.

[redacted] the Syrian shelling was perfectly timed to catch the settlers by surprise. Israeli commentators have suggested that this indicates a deliberate decision by Syria to inflict maximum casualties. The US Embassy in Tel Aviv believes that the government is behind press stories suggesting the attacks violated a tacit Syrian-Israeli understanding. The understanding was that the Israelis refrained from retaliatory air strikes as long as Damascus limited its attacks to military targets.

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Damascus may have launched the attacks in response to Prime Minister Meir's recent statements about Israeli retention of the Golan Heights and to allegations that the Israelis plan to start building a new city there. The shelling may also be more Syrian muscle-flexing prior to moving toward a disengagement agreement.

The Israelis have shown some restraint in the face of past Syrian shellings. They are likely to retaliate, however, if there are more attacks on Israeli settlements, particularly if these result in civilian casualties. The press has suggested that Israel might respond by shelling Damascus airport or by conducting air raids on Syrian military positions.

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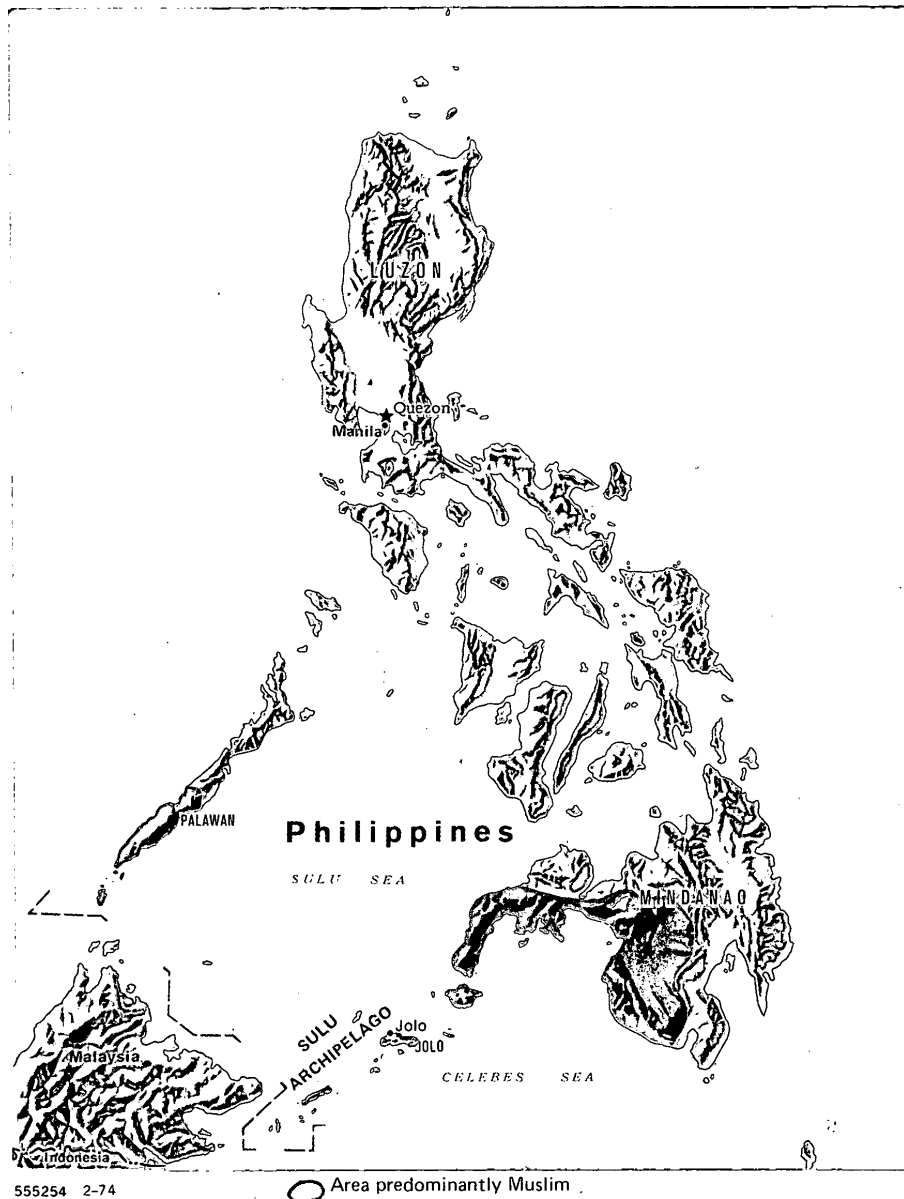
LAOS

Prime Minister Souvanna's prospects for naming a new coalition government by the first anniversary of the Laos peace agreement on February 21 have been considerably diminished. The chief Lao Communist negotiator, Phoun Sipraseuth, did not bring Souvanna the promised list of Communist cabinet ministers when he returned from his headquarters last week. The Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong, sent only a letter dealing with procedures on investing the new government.

The Communists, according to Souvanna, are still strongly opposed to submitting the names of the new coalition cabinet to the National Assembly, whose authority they do not recognize. They want to submit the new government directly to the King instead, but he has steadfastly insisted that, under the constitution, assembly ratification must precede royal investiture of the government.

Souvanna, for his own reasons, is also reluctant to take the issue to the assembly, which is dominated by his rightist political opponents. They are unhappy with his handling of the negotiations and would almost certainly insist on some say in the new government's formation.

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PHILIPPINES

Government troops have only slowly been able to reassert control over the southern Philippine city of Jolo, which Muslim insurgents largely overran late last week. The rebels attacked after a new government military offensive was launched against Muslim strongholds elsewhere on Jolo Island.

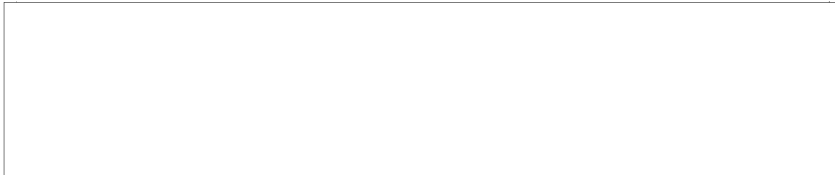
The aggressiveness of the dissident force and the ineffectiveness of the Philippine armed forces allowed the Muslims to score early victories. Government commanders evidently believed that the recent amnesty program had reduced the insurgents to relatively small, isolated groups that could be easily handled.

The fighting on Jolo points up President Marcos' continuing dilemma in coping with the Muslim insurgency. He has tried both negotiations and force, neither wholly satisfactory. Some Muslim groups--generally those under the influence of traditional political leaders--have responded to offers of accommodation with the central government. Other groups, controlled by young radicals, reject negotiations because they believe a peaceful settlement would only strengthen old-line leaders whom they want to supplant.

Although the radicals probably still represent only a minority of the Muslim dissidents, military moves against them have often backfired, precipitating widespread violence in which moderate groups have participated as well.

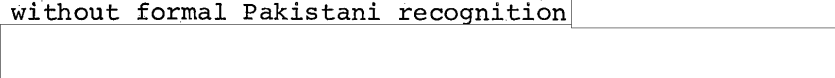
SOUTH ASIA

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Pakistan and apparently India have agreed to attend the Cairo meeting, but Dacca has not yet firmly committed itself. The Bengalees publicly maintain that there can be no meeting at any level without formal Pakistani recognition

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Dacca's insistence that recognition must precede the release of the 195 Pakistani prisoners of war held in India as "war criminals" has prevented resolution of the question. Pakistan maintained that their release must come first, but Prime Minister Bhutto has now agreed to extend recognition if Sadat can obtain a "cast-iron commitment" from Bangladesh that they will be released.

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ROMANIA - MIDDLE EAST

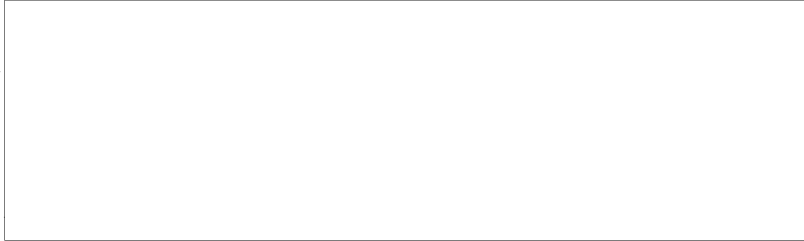
President Ceausescu is on a tour of the Middle East in an effort to get the Arabs to accept his neutralist policy toward the area and to head off Arab plans to boycott Romanian exports. Romania suffered an Arab boycott after the Middle East war in 1967. A recommendation for new economic sanctions to be imposed against Romania because of its neutral position during the October war awaits action by the Arab League.

Ceausescu arrived in Tripoli yesterday and will later visit Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. The Romanian press suggests that Ceausescu will offer limited political and economic concessions, such as support for a Palestinian state and oil-extraction equipment. He will not bow to Arab demands that Bucharest break diplomatic relations with Israel.

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NOTES



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Australia: Prime Minister Whitlam's 17-day trip through Southeast Asia went far toward convincing leaders of the six nations visited that his government is sincere in desiring a constructive role in the region. Whitlam [redacted]

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[redacted] exercised restraint in promoting an East Asian political forum--one of his projects that the Southeast Asian nations do not yet favor.

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[Redacted] CHINA

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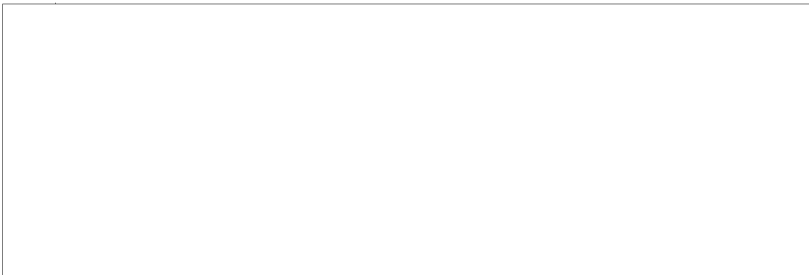
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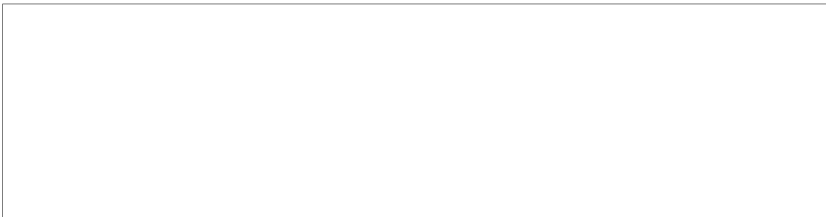
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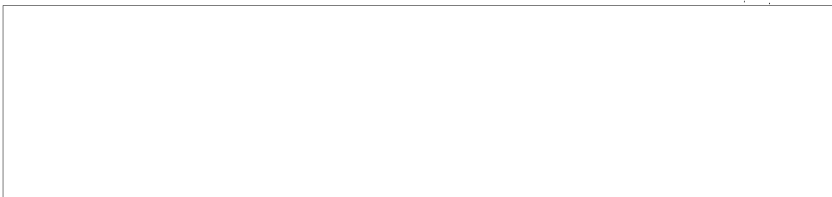
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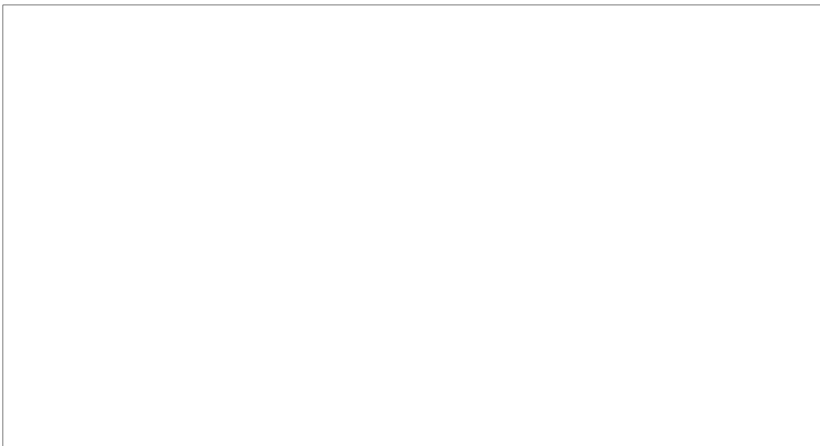
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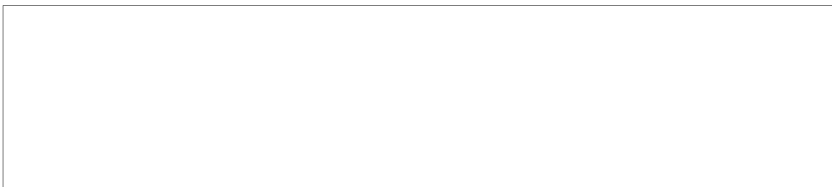
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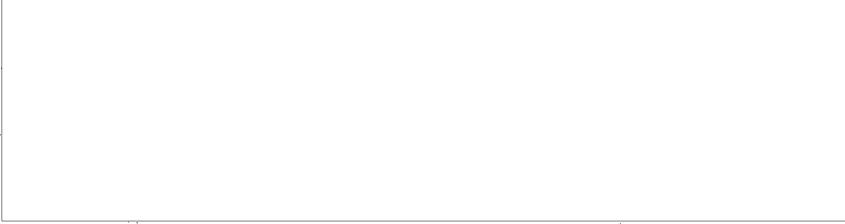
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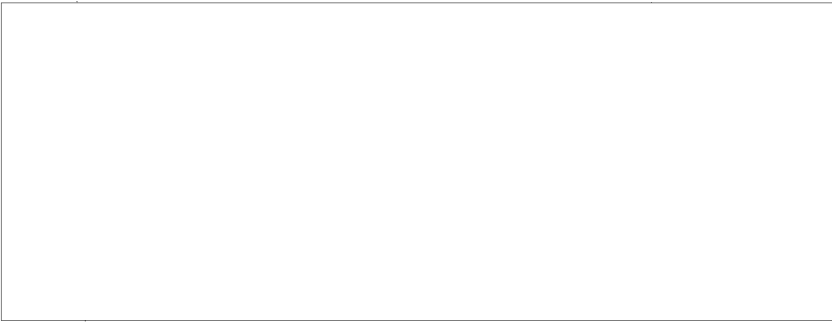
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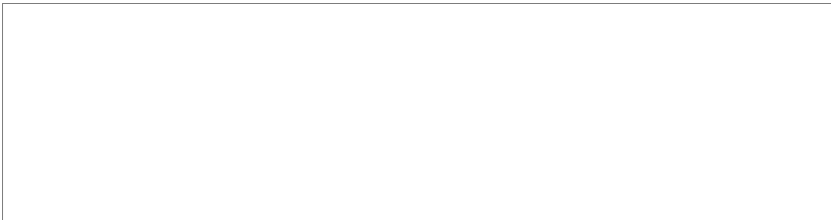
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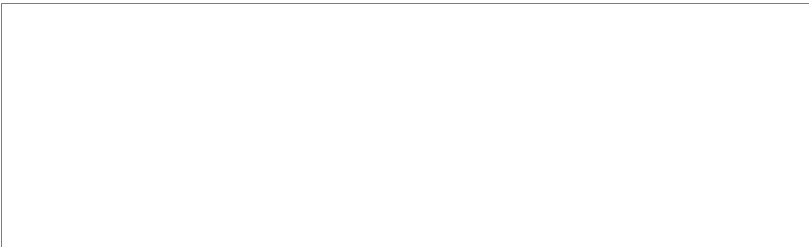
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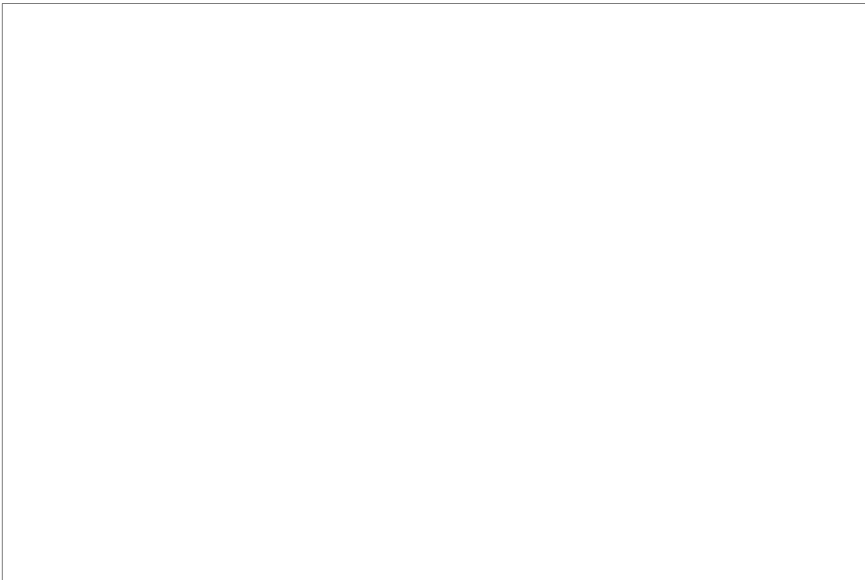
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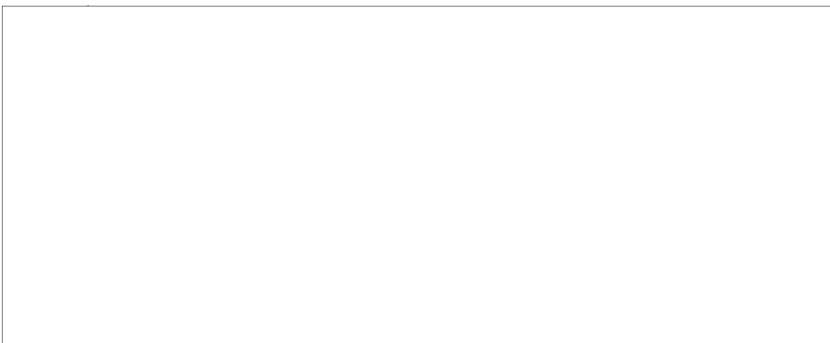
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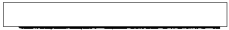
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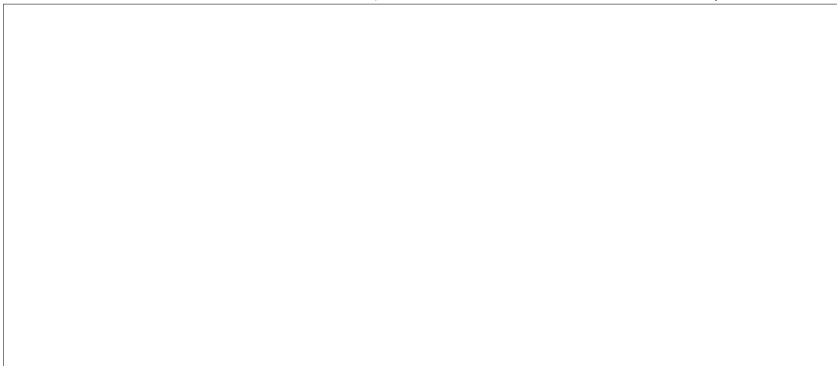
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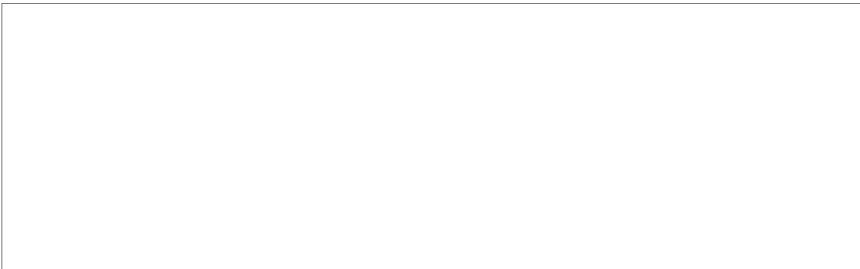
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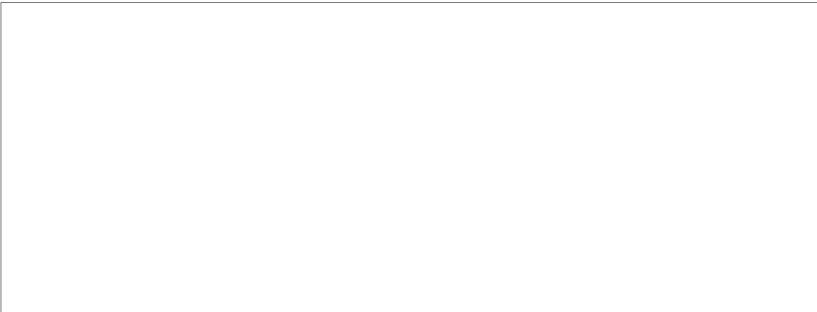
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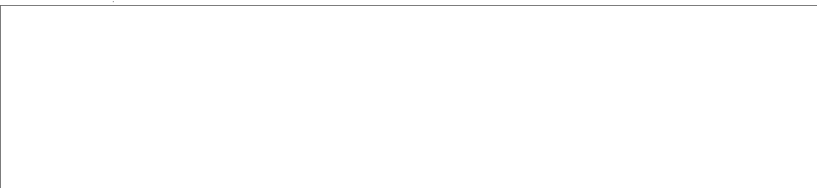
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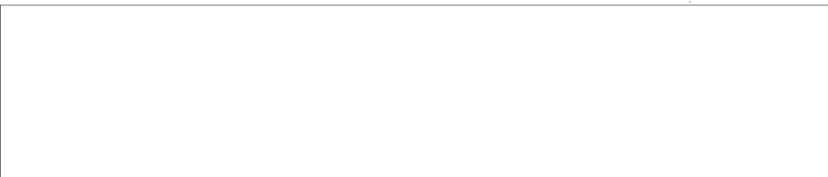
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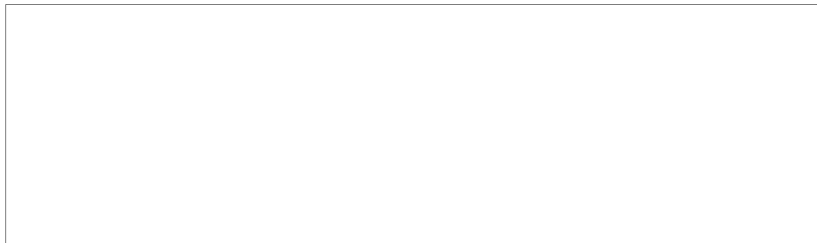
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